

The Middle Applegate Watershed Pilot Project Initiation Letter

To Pilot IDT

From Ashland Area Field Manager

The Secretary of Interior designated a Pilot to be located in the Bureau of Land Management's Medford District (BLM) to demonstrate landscape restoration of dry Douglas-fir forests featuring the principles developed by Jerry Franklin and Norm Johnson. The Middle Applegate Watershed was chosen by the Medford District BLM as the site for this Pilot due to its relatively contiguous acreage of dry Douglas-fir forests, its substantial amount of data associated with past projects and collaborative efforts, its opportunity to capitalize on the planning of current forest management projects, and its large size necessary to evaluate landscape level restoration effectiveness.

The Secretary also expects that the Pilot will provide collaborative opportunities for interested stakeholders. The Medford District has participated in long-term efforts with the Applegate Partnership (under a Memorandum of Understanding) and the Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative to find as much consent (social license) as possible to implement forest projects that are socially acceptable, ecologically appropriate and economically viable. In addition to BLM's agency partners (Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and NOAA Fisheries), these non-government entities will be key partners in successfully moving the Pilot effort forward.

The goal of the Pilot is to fulfill the Secretary of the Interior's direction to demonstrate principles of ecological restoration, as developed by Drs. Norm Johnson and Jerry Franklin, on BLM lands within the Medford District.

In addition, the Medford District has developed additional, but complimentary objectives for the Pilot:

- Integrate northern spotted owl recovery and habitat restoration principles into the Franklin/Johnson ecological forest restoration strategy, and apply new methods of effects analysis in consultation and cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Provide for a collaborative, transparent, and integrated vegetation management approach to maximize efficiency in funding, planning and implementation.

Process Steps for the Pilot.

1. Complete an assessment of vegetative conditions and owl habitat sufficient to determine which dry-Douglas fir stands are in need of restoration.
 - a. Initial analysis (Rapid Assessment) sufficient in size to develop a project for FY11), and generally covering the land area which previously held the China-Keeler/China Chapman timber sale area. Additionally, the Rapid Assessment

analysis area must meet the deadlines necessary to accommodate the coordination with Norm and Jerry in March, and the subsequent public involvement related to the selection of stands for restoration.

- b. Expanded analysis (Needs Assessment for FY12 Projects) sufficient in size to generate restoration needs on about 2,000 acres.
2. Collaborate with stakeholders on the criteria for selection of stands for restoration and the prioritization of such stands for treatment, striving to demonstrate Norm and Jerry's approach across the range of plant association groups within the dry Douglas-fir type for the FY11 project.
3. EA development and associated Section 7 consultation will occur separately as FY11 projects, and as FY12 projects.
4. Utilize adaptive management as learning opportunities arise from implementation to inform on future projects, and repeat steps 2-3 for each subsequent portion of the Middle Applegate watershed, as implementation budgets allow.

Overview. The Middle Applegate Watershed Pilot focuses its efforts within the 80,000-acre Middle Applegate Watershed, primarily on approximately 50,000 acres of public lands administered by the BLM.

The planning process will utilize scientific expertise while considering the social and economic aspects such that *all* interested stakeholders are considered. Implementation will begin in fiscal year 2011 through a series of timber sales, stewardship projects and service contracts such that when the project is completed, the landscape--especially the dry forests component--will be much more resilient than in its current state, and therefore have functions and processes that are more capable of adapting to disturbances in the system. While the Pilot focuses on the dry Douglas-fir forests, treatments will be considered for all vegetation types and ecological needs (transportation management, oak woodlands, etc.). Multiparty monitoring of the collaborative process and the projects will provide for a transparent and open restoration process.

The project emphasizes active science-based management to restore resilience in dry forests by using and further developing the Franklin/Johnson restoration principles in tandem with existing regional expertise and knowledge. A strategic focus will be the integration of northern spotted owl recovery and habitat restoration principles into the Franklin/Johnson ecological forest restoration strategy, and the application of new methods of northern spotted owl effects analysis in consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Extensive existing scientific expertise will be utilized, including current and former agency experts, university partners, sister agencies, and associated institutions. The Medford District BLM's strategies and successes with small diameter, stewardship and biomass utilization will be incorporated into planning, and industry representatives, restoration practitioners and community foresters will be consulted to validate economic efficiencies.

See the Middle Applegate briefing paper for more details on the Pilot.

Why Here (the Middle Applegate). The Middle Applegate pilot project is within the Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA). As outlined by the Northwest Forest Plan, AMAs are significant for their created intent to demonstrate, test and monitor innovative approaches to forest management, similar to that of the Dry Forest Landscape Restoration Pilot. The Middle Applegate includes significant contiguous BLM managed forest and substantial dry forest stand acreage. The opportunity also exists to capitalize on projects already in the planning process for modification and inclusion in the pilot, promoting rapid implementation of the initial projects. The first of such projects is the area previously designated as the China-Chapman and China-Keeler timber sales.

Why Now. Dry forests managed by the BLM in southwest Oregon - the resources they host and the values they reflect - are at significant risk. Past land use decisions, current conditions and expected future climatic and stand development trajectories create a scenario in need of concerted attention and action. In recognition of these factors, the Secretary of Interior supports a Medford District BLM Pilot to both provide timber resources in the near term and inform on long-term sustainable forest management.

Project Teams. The following personnel are assigned to participate in the development, analysis and implementation of the Pilot.

Pilot Oversight Team

Name	Role and Responsibility
John Gerritsma	Strategic coordination, liaison to collaborative partners, conduit to elected officials, workload scheduling, budget oversight
Ed Reilly	Rapid assessment oversight and coordination, liaison to scientists
Jim Whittington	Internal and external communications and messaging
Terry Fairbanks	Liaison, oversight and mentor for prescription development
Blair Moody	Tactical liaison to collaborative partners on economics, biomass, and stewardship contracting
Cindy Donnegan	Provide technical assistance to IDT regarding federal trust species within the Pilot planning process
Carole Jorgensen	NSO consultation advisor to RA, coordination with USFWS, mentoring and oversight for wildlife biologists
Tony Kerwin	Coordination/info exchange with district-wide planners

The Oversight Team is the strategic body and is comprised of members who have core liaison responsibilities both within BLM and from BLM to our external partners. The goal is to have a consistent understanding of and communication about the Pilot, and this Pilot's relationship with similar endeavors in Oregon (such as the Roseburg Pilot).

Interdisciplinary Team

Name	Role and Responsibility
Ed Reilly	IDT Leader, NEPA oversight
Ted Hass	Project Leader, integration and coordination between analysis and preparation, soils evaluation
Jason Reilly	NSO habitat analysis, consultation; wildlife evaluation
Mike Derrig	Hydrology evaluation
Jennifer Smith	Fish evaluation
Nate Goodwine	Silvicultural prescriptions and stewardship contracting
Craig Brown	T.S. preparation and implementation Lead
Stephanie Kelleher	NEPA assistance, resources assistance, public involvement
Brett Holcomb	Administrative and GIS support, internet scoping development, comment management, public involvement
Josh Robeson	Transportation management and evaluation
Greg Chandler	Fuels management and evaluation, service contracting
Armand Rebischke	Botany evaluation and noxious weeds

The Interdisciplinary Team is responsible for the evaluation of project proposals and discussion of effects (NEPA). Interaction between the ID Team, community members, and interested stakeholders will likely be enhanced greatly for the Pilot.

Consultants. BLM will rely on Dr. Jerry Franklin and Dr. Norm Johnson to provide the forums necessary to inform communities, stakeholders, and agencies on the scientific foundation of their approach, and to build on the rationale that informs their strategy.

Collaborative Partners. The Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative and the Applegate Partnership are long standing community entities that have organizational and administrative structures in place to support development and implementation of the Pilot. They are a valuable conduit to and from local neighborhoods and other stakeholders for outreach, education, and information exchange on forest management issues.

Public Participation. Collaboration, public involvement and transparency are key objectives in this Pilot. The levels of public involvement runs the spectrum from inform to collaboration, from simply being provided information to consensus building (see the Middle Applegate Pilot Action Plan for details). This Pilot does not replace the mandatory public involvement opportunities prescribed by laws, regulations and policies.

Project Timeline. See the Middle Applegate Action Plan for specific dates.